

MINUTES, LIMESTONE COUNTY COMMISSION, JANUARY 16, 2013

The Limestone County Commission reconvened the meeting from January 7, 2013 at 10:00 a.m. today at the Washington Street Courthouse Annex, 310 West Washington Street, Athens, AL.

Present: Gary Daly, Steve Turner, James W. "Bill" Latimer, and Ben Harrison. Absent: None. Stanley Menefee, Chairman presided.

Linda Nelson, President of the Historical Society addressed the Commission about the removal of the marble staircase at the Courthouse. She introduced Lakin Boyd, historical society board member. Mr. Boyd read an opinion on behalf of the Limestone County Historical Society, "Save the Marble Staircase in the Courthouse". In short, he stated the Limestone County Courthouse was designed by Birmingham architect, Bem Price, in 1916. His buildings reflect the influence of the neoclassical style. The removal of the staircase would ruin the symmetry inside the courthouse and compromise the architectural integrity of the building's interior.

Chairman Stanley Menefee said the plan is to preserve the Courthouse and extend its lifespan 20 or 30 more years. The elevator site currently goes to the third floor, moving the elevator would open up the fourth floor; which most folks don't know exist. He said the businesses on the square need the courthouse to remain viable. Chairman Menefee said he values the courthouse very much and doesn't want to see it changed, but it just makes sense to make it usable. Mr. Boyd stated that the courthouse should be preserved to be converted to a museum when it outlives its usefulness as a courthouse. Chairman Menefee stated removal of the staircase is necessary to meet building and safety codes and ADA requirements.

Brian Moore, construction manager for the courthouse renovation project, stated the courthouse was built for a purpose and that was to conduct county business and hold court. We had to come up with a solution that would work with the fire safety, the Americans with Disability Act and the program given by the judges. Mr. Moore explained the Fire Marshal is requiring two fire-rated stairwells. He said they are going to do everything they can to keep the historic purpose of the courthouse and preserve its integrity.

Members from the Historical Society requested that Robert Gamble, senior architectural historian from the Alabama Historical Commission, be contacted to visit the courthouse and review whether the marble staircase can be saved. Linda Nelson said the Historical Commission would be satisfied if Mr. Gamble says there's no possible way to avoid replacing the staircase.

Rex Davis invited everyone to the "Bill of Rights" rally scheduled for January 19, 2013 at 9:00 a.m. at the Courthouse.

Tony Llewellyn asked questions about the buildings being torn down on the L&S property.

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Chairman Menefee announced the Martin Luther King Holiday March is scheduled for January 21st, from the Limestone County Courthouse to the Limestone County Event Center at 9 a.m.

Chairman Menefee stated the old jail demolition bids will be opened on January 24th at 2 p.m. and that action might be taken during the next work session on January 30th if everything is in order.

Items were discussed for the January 22, 2013 Agenda.

Adjourned at 11:14 a.m.